

HINGE CONNECTOR ASSEMBLY

Field of Invention

This invention relates to an improved hinge assembly for rotative movement
5 around an axis between a plurality of components. More specifically, this invention involves an improved hinge connector assembly for securely linking the frames and earpieces of eyeglasses.

Background of the Invention

A variety of hinge assemblies for eyeglasses are well known in the art. For both
10 young hipsters as well as mature adults who prefer eyeglasses that comprise a relatively thickened frame and earpiece or temple component, these parts are often secured to one another with a screw or bolt without sufficient support integrated into the earpiece. Therefore, in this form of conventional eyeglasses, there is significant strain in the area of the interlocking hinge. This strain can be caused by the weight of the earpiece during
15 ordinary use or the result of external force, such as when an individual unintentionally steps on the glasses. These types strains inevitably cause the earpiece to come apart from the frame by loosening the bolt or screw or by tearing the hinge component off the earpiece.

Based on the nature of eyeglass earpieces which extend relatively far away from
20 the hinge and frame, this problem exists even in more contemporary forms of eyeglasses which utilize spring hinges or which include a flexible earpiece. Since the force produced by the weight of the earpiece falls completely on the interlocking hinge, it may loosen the screw that secures the earpiece to the frame. Further, during the application of intense stress to the interlocking hinge, the earpiece may even simply
25 break off.

Even in eyewear that utilizes a more firm and stable support structure for holding the earpiece to the frame, these supports are generally bulky and unsightly, such that individuals who consider themselves to be “stylish” prefer not to wear these eyeglasses.

Brief Description of the Invention

5 In view of the prior art deficiencies, the principle objective of the present invention is to provide an improved hinge assembly for securely linking together the frames and earpieces of eyeglasses.

Another objective of the present invention is to provide an improved hinge assembly that is integrated into the earpiece of eyeglasses.

10. A further objective of the present invention is to provide a hinge assembly that is neat, compact and less bulky than other prior art hinge assemblies.

An even further objective of the present invention is to provide a hinge assembly for eyeglasses that is stylish and more desirable to individuals of all ages.

Additional objectives will be apparent to those skilled in the art from the
15 description of the invention as contained herein.

In its broadest aspects the invention is an improved hinge assembly for joining an earpiece or temple to the frame of a pair of glasses for rotative movement. In a preferred embodiment, the hinge connector assembly comprises a hinge connector and connector clamp which are fastened around an earpiece by a plurality of bolts
20 proceeding through the interior of the earpiece.

For purposes providing a more secure fit around the earpiece, the hinge connector preferably includes notches for receiving tabs that extend from the connector clamp. Further, the earpiece preferably includes a depression or channel which mates with a ridge or bulge located on the hinge connector for providing a more secure fit and
25 support. The earpiece also includes depressions for mating with the tabs that extend from the connector clamp.

Hinge ears attached to the hinge assembly interlock or conventionally link up with hinge ears attached to the frame with a screw or other means known in the art.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the hinge connector
5 assembly fastened around an earpiece and attached to a frame of a pair of eyeglasses;

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of the interior surface of an earpiece having a plurality depressions for mating with the ridge on the hinge connector and the tabs extending from the connector clamp;

FIG. 1B is a perspective view of the exterior surface of an earpiece having a
10 plurality of depressions for mating with the connector clamp and the tabs extending therefrom;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of a hinge connector assembly shown in FIG. 1 attached to the connector clamp by a connecting means without an earpiece disposed therebetween;

15 FIG. 2A is an exploded view of the hinge connector and connector clamp and connecting means;

FIG. 3 is a cross sectional view taken along lines 3 - - 3 of FIG. 1 of a hinge connector assembly fixed to a frame of eyeglasses and fastened around an earpiece in the open position with dashed lines representing the earpiece with attached components
20 in the folded position;

FIG. 4 is a cross sectional front view taken along lines 4 - - 4 of FIG. 1 of a hinge connector assembly wherein the hinge connector and connector clamp are fastened around an earpiece;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of another preferred embodiment of the hinge
25 connector assembly fastened around an earpiece and attached to a frame of a pair of eyeglasses;

FIG 6. is a perspective view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 5 of a hinge connector attached to the connector clamp by a connecting means without an earpiece disposed therebetween;

FIG. 7 is a cross sectional view taken along lines 7 - - 7 if FIG. 5 of a hinge connector assembly fixed to a frame of eyeglasses and fastened around an earpiece in the open position with dashed lines representing the earpiece with attached components in the folded position;

FIG. 8 is a cross sectional view taken along lines 7 - - 7 if FIG. 5 of a hinge connector assembly wherein the hinge connector and connector clamp are fastened around an earpiece.

Detailed Description of the Invention

Referring to the drawings, FIGs. 1 through 4 depict a preferred embodiment of the inventive hinge connector assembly (10). The assembly (10) comprises a hinge connector (12) and a connector clamp (14) fastened in the vicinity of the proximal extremity of an earpiece (15). The hinge connector (12) includes an end wall (22) and a plate (24). The plate (24) has receiving notches (26, 28) and bolt holes (30, 32), as well as an internal ridge (34) which extends outwardly adjacent to the earpiece (15).

Significantly, as depicted in FIG. 1A, the earpiece (15) has an interior depression (36) allowing the ridge (34) to rest in between and against the earpiece (15). Preferably, the length, width and height dimensions of the ridge (34) correspond to the length, width and depth dimensions of the depression (36) respectively. As shown in FIG. 3, the ridge (34) is mated with the depression (36). Certainly, a number of configurations for the respective dimensions of the ridge (34) and depression (36) can be employed without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Further, any appropriate means for creating and shaping the depression (36) that are well known in the art may be utilized.

Preferably, the end wall (22) and plate (24) form an interior angle of ninety degrees which enables the wall (22) to be flush against the end of the earpiece (15) and the lens frame (17) of the eyeglasses. See FIG. 3.

The plate (24) also accommodates a hinge (16) that is attached to plate (24) by
5 conventional welding or other means well known in the art. In this embodiment, the hinge (16) comprises three hinge ears (18) what are is linked to the lens frame (17) by virtue of a compatible set of hinge ears (20) or other corresponding structure attached to the frame (17). Of course any number of hinge ears on the assembly (10) and corresponding lens frame (17) may be utilized depending on the size of the frame (17).
10 Accordingly, in glasses comprising relatively thinner earpieces, two hinge ears may be used, and vice versa. Further, the hinge (16) may also join with hinges or compatible structures that are attached directly to the lens, such as in glasses which do not have a conventional frame that proceeds around the entire perimeter of the lens. Therefore, for purposes of this description, where an area of an eyeglass lens accommodates a hinge
15 structure, this portion of the lens is also referred to as a "frame."

The connector clamp (14) includes a plate (38) and a tongue (44) which extends from the plate (38) towards the lens frame (17) of the eyeglasses. As shown in FIGs. 2A, 3 and 4, threaded apertures or bores (46,48) that are located on the plate (38) and tongue (44) extend inwardly through apertures (37,39) in the interior of the earpiece (15).
20 Although not shown, the earpiece (15) may also comprise an inner skeletal structure, such as a metallic rod that is flattened at one end, which provides support and helps prevent unwanted flexion in the earpiece (15). In earpieces comprising this skeleton, the bores (46,48) which extend through apertures (37,39) in the interior of the earpiece (15) preferably also proceed through the skeletal structure thereby providing even further
25 support. Further, as depicted in FIGs. 1, 2 and 2A, the clamp plate (38) also includes a plurality of protruding tabs (40, 42) that are received respectively by the notches (26,28)

of the hinge connector plate (24). As shown in FIGs. 1B, the earpiece (15) includes an inset (41) having generally the same width, length and height dimensions to accommodate the plate (38), tongue (44) and tabs (40,42), wherein the clamp (14) is applied to the earpiece (15) at the inset (41). When the clamp (14) is applied, the top of the plate (38) is generally flush with the exterior lateral surface of the earpiece (15), as shown in FIG. 3, although not necessarily so, as long as there is a secure fit around the earpiece (15). Of course the depth of the inset (41) and thickness of the plate (38) primarily dictate whether the plate (38) is flush with the exterior of the earpiece (15). Generally, conventional means for creating and shaping the inset (41) are well known in the art and any appropriate means may be used.

As shown in FIGs. 2 through 4 the connecting means for holding the clamp (12) and connector (14) in place around the earpiece are a plurality of bolts (50,52) which pass through and are screwed into the threaded bores (46,48), thereby forming a tight and secure fit around the earpiece. Of course, other connecting means known in the art may be used in place of the bolts (50,52) and bores (46,48). Although this embodiment employs two bolts (50,52), any number of additional bolts or even just one bolt can be used in practicing the invention. Further, it should also be understood that the bolt holes (30, 32) which are found on the hinge connector plate (24) and the threaded bores (46,48) which extend from clamp plate (38) and tongue (44) in the embodiments described herein may actually be switched such that the holes are located on the clamp plate and tongue and the threaded bores are located on the hinge connector plate. Moreover, the locations of the notches (26,28) and tabs (40,42) may be inverted as well.

In another preferred embodiment, as shown in FIGs. 5 through 8, the hinge assembly (10A) differs in some aspects. As a result of the reduced height and relatively thinner earpiece (15A), the hinge (16A) attached to the plate (24A) comprises only two hinge ears (18A) rather than three, as shown in the first embodiment of the hinge

connector assembly (10A). As noted above, any number of hinge ears may be utilized depending on the respective height and thickness of the earpiece. Accordingly, for relatively larger earpieces, it would be preferable to use additional hinge ears for purposes of providing increased support and stability.

5 In this embodiment interior angles formed by the wall (22A) and plate (24A) are approximately one hundred and ten degrees. When compared to the prior embodiment shown in FIGs. 1 through 4 that incorporates an interior angle of ninety degrees, the increased angle allows for increased rotation of the earpiece (15A) when unfolding the glasses to an open position. In this embodiment the frame (17A) is receded to
10 accommodate the wall (22A) that protrudes forward as a result of the increased interior angle.

 Although the invention has been described with reference to particular embodiments, it is to be understood that these embodiments are merely illustrative of the application of the principles of the invention. Thus it is to be understood that
15 numerous modifications may be made in the illustrative embodiments of the invention and other arrangements may be devised without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

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